

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

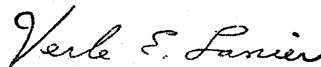
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice AO-1265

For: FSA State Executive Directors

Preparing and Submitting FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plans

Approved by: Associate Administrator, Operations and Management



1 Developing FY 2003 Outreach Strategic Plans

A

Background

Outreach is a critical component to the agency's objective of ensuring equal opportunity of services to all customers and potential customers. A uniform format and set of criteria enhance the agency's ability to plan, implement, track, and evaluate the results of outreach efforts.

B

Purpose

This notice provides

- guidance (Exhibit 1) to States for developing FY 2003 Outreach Strategic Plans
 - definitions of terms used in outreach activities (Exhibit 2).
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C

Submitting Plans

Submit completed plans, using the format in Exhibit 1, to Director, Outreach Programs Staff, by September 20, 2002, using either of the following:

- FAX to 202-690-4727
- FEDEX, or equivalent, to:

Cliff J. Herron
Director, Outreach Programs Staff
Farm Service Agency
1400 Independence Ave, Room 3723
Washington, DC 20250.

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Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2002 8-7-02	FSA State Executive Directors

Notice AO-1265

1 Developing FY 2003 State Strategic Outreach Plans (Continued)

D

Contact

Direct questions about this notice to either of the following:

- Cliff J. Herron, Director, Outreach Programs Staff, at 202-720-7619
 - Mike Hill, Associate Director, Outreach Programs Staff, at 202-690-1299.
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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Planning

Develop a Statement of Purpose

Sometimes vision and mission statements are combined into a single Statement of Purpose. Vision and mission statements describe the current and future activities of the organization and clearly states what sets the organization apart from others. The statements should include:

- a list of customers
- describe what the products and services do
- describe the unique attributes of the organization that set it apart from others in the same field.

Compose a paragraph or a set of sentences that summarizes the purpose of the organization based on this information.

Sample Vision Statement

To enhance the historical mission of FSA programs by increasing the participation of small, limited resource, minority, and underserved farmers and ranchers in the Farm Service Agency.

Sample Mission Statement

Ensure that all underserved farmers and ranchers have equal and timely access to all FSA programs and information, are treated with dignity and respect upon visits or requests, are encouraged and assisted in pursuing to own and operate a farming or ranching business, and with this knowledge are given the opportunity to participate in all FSA programs.

Develop Operating Values

Operating values or guiding principles explicitly state the organization's principles and values. They serve as standards for judging both organization policies and actions and individual conduct. They also define the organization's position and serve as a cornerstone for culture building. Topics generally covered by values include:

- importance of customers and customer service
- commitment to quality
- commitment to innovation
- respect for the individual person and the duty the agency has to employees and external customers
- importance of honesty, integrity, fairness, and ethical standards
- duty to stakeholders
- importance of protecting the environment
- cooperation with partners.

Compose a series of sentences that express the organization's position on each of these topics or any others, which the organization deems necessary.

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Sample Guiding Principles

To effectively achieve our vision and mission, the following attributes express our guiding principles.

- **Values to:**
 - **Customer Service** (See Exhibit 2 for definition of “underserved customer”.)
 - Listen to customer needs.
 - Treat customers with respect and dignity.
 - Deal with customers with honesty, integrity, and impartiality
 - Be responsible and accountable for actions.
 - **Quality and Innovation**
 - Be creative
 - Proactive, not reactive
 - Paradigm of change
 - Commitment
 - Promote outreach.
- **Identify Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are individuals who have a stake in how well the organization achieves its mission. It normally includes the members of the organization, customers, and shareholders. List all stakeholders involved in the operation or business.

Sample Stakeholders (See Exhibit 2 for the definition of "stakeholders".)

- County Committee Members
- Farmers and Ranchers
- Farmer advocates
- Non profit community-based organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Land grant institutions
- Other USDA and Federal agencies
- Farm workers
- Unions
- Other leaders
- Tribal, State, and local government entities

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Identify Stakeholders' Expectations

Expectations are those things that the stakeholders expect from the organization. Define what each expects from the organization. If you do not know what their expectations are, talk to them and find out. This can be accomplished by direct discussions, interviews, and questionnaires.

Sample Stakeholders Expectations

- Cooperation and collaboration
- Build relationships
- Partnerships
- Consistency - truthfulness
- Information

Identify Critical Issues

Issues that may affect the organization's ability to deliver agency programs and accomplish the mission. List no more than 10 major **critical** issues.

Sample Critical Issues

- Cultural understanding and differences
- Insufficient budgets
- Office closings
- Low farm prices
- Program limitations
- Barriers to helping the underserved
- Increase in the name and address file
- Profile counties (who is there)

Identify Keys to Achieving Success

Issues that are key factors in achieving the success of delivering agency programs and accomplishing the mission. On the following list no more than 10 major headings for each.

Sample Keys to Achieving Success

- Positive working environment
- Training, both internal and external
- Establish partnerships with helper groups
- Build support to increase programs
- Creative outreach ideas and solutions
- Effective communication

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Develop Goals, Objectives, and Action Plans**Goals**

A goal is a statement of intentions for a specific aspect of the organization. To develop goals review critical issues and ask what has to be done to meet the challenge of each major issue group and establish a completion date for each goal. Try to limit the number of goals to no more than 7 or 8.

Objectives

Objectives are measurable initiatives that support the goal. Review each goal and develop 1 or more objectives that will enable the organization to reach that goal. Also, ensure that each objective contains language that indicates when the objective has been met and who is responsible.

Action Plans

An action plan describes those activities that must be accomplished to meet a specific objective. It answers the questions; what, who, when, and how and specifies performance measurement indicators to determine successful completion of the action plan to indicate the level or degree of completion. The action plan should:

- identify the goal and objective to which it is linked
- identify who is responsible for ensuring that the objective is met, which could be an individual or team
- list all the activities that must be met with completion dates and responsible parties
- include performance measurement indicator such as schedule, quality, productivity, etc. that will be used to determine successful completion of the activities
- include performance measures for each indicator to measure the level of action plan completion.

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Sample Goals With Objectives and Action Plans

Goal 1 Each County Office will develop and maintain a comprehensive profile of the farmers and ranchers in each county they service.

Objectives

- To determine and increase the number of small, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and underserved farmers and ranchers participating in programs and to include their names and addresses in FSA systems.
- Identify culture and language needs.
- Develop a tracking system to measure the progress of services and program participation to the underserved.

Action Plan

- Identify the farmers in each county by size (number), race, gender, age, and type of production.
- Develop a list of media used by the farming community and creative ways to use the media, such as video, signs, and other form of public campaigns.
- Develop a name and address file of all community-based organizations, farm advocates, tribal governments, and other community leadership that are working with the underserved farmers and ranchers.
- Develop a list of agencies that do referrals for our customers, such as HUD, food stamps, health, financial counselors, crisis units, and other groups that work with farmers in the county.
- Develop production, marketing, and processing information for use by county farmers and ranchers to help increase their income.
- Promote enterprise diversification.

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Sample Goals With Objectives and Action Plans (Continued)

Goal 2 Ensure all customers have fair and equal access and are provided respect and dignity in the delivery of FSA programs and services, especially the underserved.

Objectives

- Identify the needs of underserved customers.
- Identify barriers or obstacles preventing fair and equal access to and participation in FSA programs and services by the underserved.
- Increase membership of the County Committee to the underserved so that it is similar to the population make-up of the county as listed in the profile.

Action Plan

- Develop a means to efficiently and effectively address the needs of customers.
- Provide cultural sensitivity training to staff.
- Establish focus groups with partners to identify the needs of diverse customers.
- Identify barriers.
- Maximize financial and technical assistance to underserved farmers and ranchers and execute vigorous outreach efforts, with the assistance and cooperation of partner organizations.
- Provide customers with accurate and timely information to enable them to best use agency programs to meet their needs.

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FY 2003 State Outreach Strategic Plan (Continued)

Sample Goals With Objectives and Action Plans (Continued)

Goal 3 County Office will develop a comprehensive communication plan to ensure outreach to the underserved.

Objective

Provide our customers with language friendly information on our programs and services.

Action Plan

- Develop information forming focus groups of interested parties in each county. These would be partnerships with community-based organizations, advocates, tribal governments, faith-based organizations, and any other interested individual.
- Develop effective outreach meeting agendas and demonstrations in conducting outreach meetings and having the active participation of the community.
- Assist others in obtaining information on different cultures, seek to use that cultural awareness, and how to build this knowledge into the outreach plan and meetings.
- Help develop educational materials so that employees can spot program barriers and make or recommend effective and efficient changes to remove the barriers timely.
- Develop and implement a complaint-friendly system. This system can be used to improve outreach efforts and successfully solve problems before they become equal opportunity complaints.
- Provide cross training on all USDA programs.
- Recognize the existence of language and other barriers between Agency personnel and customers.
- Disseminate information through partner organizations.
- Give priority consideration to underserved communities in decisions for location or closing of full service or satellite centers.
- Develop a reporting system that will allow for accurate and timely reporting of all outreach activity and efforts from the County Office, through the District Office, to the State Office so it can be used to assist in developing the State Outreach Report.

Review and Revise Strategic Plan On a Regular Basis

Because of the dynamic nature of economic, social, political, technological, and other factors, planning must be done on a continual basis. A strategic plan is a living document and for it to remain alive, it must receive a lot of attention, be nurtured, satisfied, and fulfilled. A strategic plan developed in January may be obsolete in April, therefore, it must be revisited and revised on a regular basis when changing conditions dictate.

Definitions of Terms Used in Outreach Activities

**Community-
Based
Organizations**

Community-based organizations are nonprofit, non government organizations with a well-defined constituency that includes all or part of a particular community, for example, communities consisting of socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who play a role in developing and implementing any program or project undertaken by the organization, faith-based organizations, nonprofit groups, civil and business organizations, etc. or recognized groups, concerned with improving the quality of life for residents within local communities. Organizations that serve as project initiators and “managers,” thereby, providing avenues for involvement with and access to locally led processes and activities.

Special interest groups for example, women's groups, environmental groups, farm or woodland groups, trade and professional associations, educational associations, and schools, etc.

Customers

Customers are individuals, groups, or organizations that receive, pay for, or are affected by a product, service, or process of USDA agencies. Customers receive products and services either directly from USDA agencies or indirectly through other people or organizations. USDA’s customers are the people and organizations that actually receive the intended benefit of its products and services.

Outreach

Outreach is the efforts and activities conducted to ensure that all customers, that is individuals, groups, populations, and communities throughout the United States and its territories, are made aware of, understand, and have a working knowledge of USDA programs and services. Outreach will ensure that participation in and benefits of these programs and services are equitable and made accessible to all customers, including the underserved.

**Outreach
Coordinator or
Liaison**

The Outreach Coordinator or Liaison is an agency representative on outreach who is responsible for coordinating and monitoring program outreach goals and accomplishments to agency customers with special emphasis on underserved customers.

Partners

Partners are those individuals, groups, or organizations, either internal or external, who help deliver USDA products or services and share common concerns and goals to help carryout agency missions, for example, agricultural labor unions, universities, colleges, State and local governments, community-based organizations, private industry, and others.

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Definitions of Terms Used in Outreach Activities (Continued)

Programs and Activities

Programs and activities are program outreach efforts, which use partnerships with community-based organizations, land grant and other educational institutions, and program delivery initiatives to identify and address specific needs of USDA customers.

Regulated Parties

Regulated parties are those individuals and organizations with which USDA personnel interact to ensure compliance with 1 or more laws or regulations.

Socially Disadvantaged Group

A socially disadvantaged group, as defined in section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Pub.L. 101-624, is a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. This may include ethnic groups protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and referenced in section 8(a)(5) of the Small Business Act [15 U.S.C. 67(a)(5)], which are as follows: Blacks, not of Hispanic origin, American Indians or Alaska Natives, Hispanics, and Asians or Pacific Islanders. This definition was modified by the Agricultural Credit Improvement Act of 1992 to include gender.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those individuals, groups, private and public organizations, and government agencies who have an interest in USDA products or services and/or in how those products or services are produced. Stakeholders include special interest groups and organizations, such as environmental, animal rights, agricultural groups, National and State Outreach Councils, agencies, farmers, USDA Office of Outreach, and farm worker labor unions.

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Definitions of Terms Used in Outreach Activities (Continued)

State and National Outreach Councils

State and National Outreach Councils are entities established to coordinate outreach efforts of all USDA agencies with State and local-level program delivery. Outreach councils are responsible for establishing partnerships with community-based organizations; 1890 and 1862 Land Grant Institutions, 1994 Tribal Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Servicing Institutions, other educational institutions; and the Research and Employment Access Programs Initiative to enhance program and service delivery to underserved communities. Reference Secretary Memorandum 4360-1, “Actions to Foster Improved Outreach to Customers.”

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is service, information, or help provided to USDA customers that enables them to participate in programs or better receive services, realize designed benefits from agency activities, and promote an understanding of the USDA mission, goals, and objectives.

Underserved Customers, Populations, or Communities

Underserved customers, populations, or communities are individuals, groups, populations, or communities that USDA agencies have not effectively protected, supported, or promoted in the delivery of programs and services on a fair and equitable basis. Historically the underserved are farmers or ranchers, farm workers, persons under the poverty level, and land owners or operators with limited resources, minority groups (including American Indians and Alaska Natives), women, and persons with disabilities.

USDA Service Center

A USDA Service Center is a satellite or mobile office jointly staffed and funded by the Federal agencies that facilitates access to applicable programs by members of farming and rural communities. This is the first step toward achieving “one-stop shopping” for USDA farm program customers.

Example: Collocating local offices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Services Agency, and Rural Development.
